EDITORIAL COMMENT

Many of those who heard Mr. Vernon Bailey's talk on "Modern methods in mammalogical field work," at the New York meeting of the Society last May, expressed the intention of capturing some small mammals for home vivariums. Doubtless most of these, like the writer, neglected to do so. But when Mr. Bailey departed on an extended field trip in July, he left in the editor's office an assortment of small cages containing field mice, deer mice, and pocket mice of various species. Before one day was gone it became apparent that these little creatures were going to be very interesting indeed, and they have since proved highly entertaining and instructive as well. The little pocket mice of the genus *Perognathus* are especially admired, as they can be handled at pleasure; but the commoner forms of *Peromyscus* and *Microtus*, although less gentle and confiding, are no less fascinating subjects for a cage on the study table. The editor can now recommend to all mammalogists the substitution of small furred animals for the conventional canary or goldfish.

Members of the Society are urgently requested to look over carefully the list of members which appeared in the last number. Many persons who should affiliate with the Society have doubtless not as yet had the matter brought to their attention, and a little effort will doubtless add several hundred names to the membership roll of the Society. The Journal could be greatly enlarged and improved by an increased revenue.

The actual date of publication of the preceding number of the Journal of Mammalogy (vol. 1, no. 4) was August 24, 1920.

The *National Humane Review* for May, 1920, makes the statement that "zoos and menageries are survivals of that Roman civilization which perished under practices of cruelty, selfishness, cupidity and immorality, and these qualities are actively disclosed now in our own civilization by our approval and patronage of wickednesses which helped wreck the Romans;" and, further along, that "zoos and menageries are essentially barbaric," and that the training of wild animals almost always results in "diabolical cruelty."

It is unfortunate that a great organization like the National Humane Society, which is doing so much good in some ways, should adopt an attitude of hostility to the zoological garden, when it ought to give such institutions its cooperation and help. Of course the statements quoted are not to be taken seriously; a magazine devoted to reform must be in a measure sensational. The zoo is a survival of the Roman civilization, it is true; but so is the school, the art museum, and the public bath. The zoological garden idea is much older than the Romans; the ancient Egyptians kept collections of wild animals, as doubtless did still earlier peoples, far back of all record. Well-conducted zoological gardens offer great educational and recreational advantages, which are being more and more appreciated, and new zoos are now being established in cities throughout the world. They are very popular—much more so than most other educational establishments—and because they appeal to a vast number of people they are able, unquestionably, to do a great deal of good. Approximately two

million people annually visit the New York Zoological Park and the National Zoo in Washington. A total attendance of 2,229,605 was recorded for the year ending June 30, 1920, at the latter establishment. This does not necessarily imply that there are that many "barbarians" among the people of Washington or the visiting tourists, for some of the enthusiasts visited the zoo at least once a week during the year; some of the most interested went oftener.

The modern zoological garden is conducted on a much higher plane than was the ancient animal collection. There have undeniably been cruelties to animals in menageries in times past. Those familiar with our leading gardens nowadays know how much expert care is given the animals, how contented and happy most of them are, and how much longer many species live in captivity than in a wild state. Most wild animals resist capture, it is true, but so does a colt or a domestic pig. Once safely in the modern zoological garden almost any wild creature rapidly becomes a contented pet. Kindness and consideration for his charges is one of the first essential qualifications required of the keeper, and no brutal or inhuman act is tolerated. In the first place, it does not pay; animals are expensive, and every care must be taken to insure that contentment necessary to good health and a long survival. The management now is most certain to be made up of animal lovers and protectionists, men who are naturally kind to animals, and constantly working for their preservation and good. Improved buildings, cages, and paddocks are all the time being devised; improved methods of care are constantly being studied; any plan, in short, that tends to better conditions for the comfort and health of the animals is eagerly adopted as soon as its merits are proved.

The writer does not particularly care for trained animal shows, and does not know a great deal about methods used in teaching wild animals to perform, but he has had some acquaintance with trainers, and in so far as his experience goes has never seen or heard of, first hand, the "diabolical cruelty" so often credited to the profession. There may be a difference of opinion, of course, as to just what constitutes "diabolical cruelty," but the few professional animal trainers personally known to him have been kindly, big hearted men, with an intense love for animals; men who would be decidedly and vigorously quick to resent any act of cruelty, torture, or even annoyance to their pets. Isolated cases of cruelty to animals in zoos and menageries today are not representative of conditions in general. The zoo as a public institution should not be condemned because of such cases. The *National Humane Review* records many cases of extreme brutality and crime to children by acts of human monsters, but no one advocates the abolishment of the privilege of rearing children because of these unnatural, isolated cases.

Zoological parks and exhibitions of living animals will probably always be with us; the idea is growing in popularity all the time, and becomes more important as the natural ranges of wild creatures become restricted. Conspicuous species and groups of animals are being hunted and trapped from the face of the earth, or crowded out of existence by man's use of the land, and many forms will soon survive only in park-reared examples. Fortunate indeed may be the fare of the family of animals that is safely settled in a comfortable park paddock, while their kind in a wild state are being hunted to actual extermination.

Any cruelty or acts of negligence in the care of animals should be condemned. But it is folly, because of isolated cases in ill-managed menageries, to condemn all zoological collections; to advocate depriving the children of their joy, adults of their recreation and pleasure, and the scientists and artists of the opportunity for study. If the writers in the *Humane Review* were more familiar with actual conditions in our best up-to-date zoological gardens, they probably would not make such sweeping statements.

An official from the local Humane Society once visited the zoological park in Washington to investigate an alleged case of cruelty to a bear. After examining into the case he admitted that the charges were wholly false. When he returned to his carriage, however, an animal-loving park employee directed his attention to the extreme type of overcheck he was using. On his next visit to the park, this agent sheepishly admitted on inquiry that he had removed this check just before entering the grounds. He knew it was wrong, was ashamed again to be seen with it in the park, yet persisted in its use. But we do not sweepingly condemn all humane societies because of this isolated case of cruelty to his horse by one of their officials. In the main, they have our genuine sympathy and hearty support.

—N. H.